

# Chief to step down

## Harriman will retire

By Kathryn Koch  
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DUXBURY — After more than 7 years at the helm, Duxbury Fire Chief Bill Harriman is retiring.

Harriman said he takes pride in the fact that he is the same person as fire chief as he was when he was out fighting fires full-time.

Although he has been thinking about retiring for a few months, he said the decision was not an easy one. He said he feels guilty about leaving, although it's time.

"I vacillated back and forth because I truly love what I'm doing,"

he said.

Although his official retirement date is Aug. 10, 2004, Harriman will end his time with the department on May 15 and use up the vacation time he built up over the last 32 years.

Harriman said there isn't any one particular reason he is retiring now, but the death of his father, William, in June, and turning 60 years old in July got him thinking about retiring and making the best of the rest of his life. Part of that is putting his wife Lucy, his three children and three grandchildren first because he said he feels like he has ignored them. They are contemplating moving to Virginia to be near his daughter and grandchildren. He also looks

forward to traveling around the country.

Harriman has been with the Duxbury fire department for 32 years, starting as a firefighter on July 6, 1971. On July 1, 1996 he was named acting chief and took on the role on a permanent basis on Oct. 28, 1996.

He said he knew he wanted to be a firefighter "somewhere between diapers and short pants." He said it's a family tradition started with his father and his uncle, who were call firefighters, and continued with himself and his brother, Dana, the fire chief in Carver.

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# Fire chief Bill Harriman to retire

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"That kind of got the spark going," he said.

One of the projects Harriman wants to finish is installing a fire alarm system in all town buildings. He will also focus on next year's budget. He said it is upsetting that this year's funding crisis has led to the closure of the Ashdod fire station on days when the station cannot be manned as needed.

"It's very difficult," he said. "I know clearly the difference that station make in response times, and every time I agonize over the fact that someone will need a fire truck or an ambulance."

Harriman said it takes five minutes to get to north Duxbury from the Ashdod station and 10 to 12 minutes from the central station, but he has an obligation to keep his firefighters safe by maintaining a set number of people on duty.

Harriman said being able to work as part of a team to reopen the Ashdod station in 2000 after 10 years of having it closed was one of the highlights of his time in Duxbury.

Another was being able to buy a new ladder truck last year.

"I thought that was a real team effort," he said.

Deputy Fire Chief Wayne Sjostedt said the fire department is losing one of the most outstanding chiefs in its history.

"It's a sad time for the fire department, but it's a good time for him," he said.

Sjostedt joined the department as a call firefighter three years before Harriman and is impressed with what Harriman has done.

"He's done an awful lot for the department," he said. "He's brought the equipment up, and brought the department through tough money times."

Sjostedt said one fire stands out in his mind as an example of how Harriman was able to lead the department through a difficult time. It was about three years ago when an undermanned department responded to a fire in 60 acres of woods off Route 53. The department was short-handed because firefighters were responding to a fire in Plymouth but Harriman was able to put the fire out with mutual aid assistance from as far as Whitman and Scituate.

"He took the reins of it and did a good job of it," said Sjostedt.

Town manager Rocco Longo, who appointed Harriman as chief, said Harriman made the choice an easy

one. He said the fact that Harriman was turned down for the job when he applied in 1993 but still kept striving to do what was best for the department was a sign of his character.

Longo said Harriman set the standard to be looked up to in his management of the fire department and by far lived up to his promise.

"Absolutely, there isn't a better advocate for the department," he said. "There isn't a better qualified person."

Longo said Harriman was able to meet the challenge of being fire chief because of his commitment, energy and enthusiasm.

Harriman said his advice to the next fire chief is to not lose touch with the people, because his ability to work with others stood the department in good stead.

"I think I work with people pretty well and see the other guy's position," he said.

He advises the next chief to consider being himself regardless of title.

Harriman said it means a lot to him to have people wish him well.

"I love this town, and I love the fire department more than you can imagine," he said.